

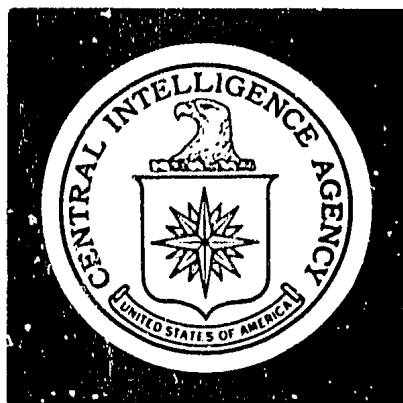
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DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# Intelligence Memorandum

*The Warsaw Talks: A New Round*

State Dept. review completed

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17 January 1970  
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
17 January 1970

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Warsaw Talks: A New Round

Following a series of American initiatives designed to reopen a Sino-US dialogue, Peking on 8 January ended its two-year opposition to formal contacts with the US and agreed to resume diplomatic meetings in Warsaw on 20 January. The Chinese appear keenly interested in reopening the talks at this time, primarily in order to improve their weak international position vis-a-vis Moscow, but also to encourage US neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute and to sound out the US on a number of important Asian problems.

Despite the obvious tactical advantages for China in renewing the talks, Peking was slow to respond to persistent US initiatives over the past six months. Fundamental constraints imposed by Maoist ideology and Chinese national pride, together with continuing differences among the Chinese leadership, account for the delay in China's response. These factors will continue to block any significant move by the Chinese to modify their position on fundamental Sino-US differences when the talks resume.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates.

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Peking Sniffs the Wind

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Despite China's continued tough public position toward Washington, since last summer a number of discreet indications from Chinese officials and oblique reflections in Chinese propaganda have suggested that a more pragmatic and flexible attitude was developing in Peking. This change was almost certainly encouraged by the concurrent action of the Nixon administration to ease Sino-US tensions in Asia and to improve chances for a resumption of the talks.

2. Perhaps of more importance, however, was the increased concern in Peking over Soviet military and political pressure against China in the wake of the Ussuri River clashes last March. Although they continued to voice a hostile line toward both the USSR and the US, it gradually became apparent to the Chinese that their weak position internationally in disputes with Moscow necessitated a less rigid approach to foreign affairs in general and to the US in particular.

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4. At the same time, Chinese propaganda commentary contained several significant and unusual omissions concerning US policy in Asia--an apparent demonstration of uncertainty over Chinese policy toward Washington. During one period of President Nixon's Asian tour in late July and August, Peking made no comment for five days. More importantly, Chinese propaganda contained only one passing reference to the simultaneous trip of Secretary Rogers to more sensitive Asian countries, including Taiwan and Hong Kong--a silent approach contrasting sharply with the scalding Chinese attacks against the secretary's Asian tour during the spring. In addition, the Chinese passed over several other opportunities for anti-US polemics, most notably Washington's repeated calls for renewal of the Warsaw sessions.

5. Following these signs of a possible "thaw" in Peking's posture toward Washington, an authoritative article on US policy released in Peking on 28 September appeared to represent the first direct public sign of a more forthcoming Chinese attitude. Although it focused on the familiar theme of Peking's rebuffs to US aggression over the past 20 years, the article was largely retrospective and left the impression that Peking no longer considered Washington a strong threat to Chinese security. In addition, the article affirmed the existence of recent "changes" in US policy toward China and stated that Washington had become "more and more passive" toward China in recent years.

6. In line with this, and in apparent reaction to the start of the Sino-Soviet talks in Peking in late October, the Chinese moderated their public opposition to negotiations with Washington and established what appeared to be an ideological justification for renewed contacts with the US. For example, one Chinese local broadcast stated that Peking's "dual revolutionary tactics" of negotiating while resisting Soviet aggression could be applied by "all revolutionary people" in dealings with

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both the USSR and the US. Although this line was not authoritatively proclaimed by Peking, a number of provincial broadcasts supported it by invoking an article written by Chairman Mao in 1945 justifying tactical negotiations with an enemy during a period of "protracted struggle." These developments may have been reflecting a fundamental decision in Peking to accept a US initiative to resume the talks. In any case, the Chinese in early November appeared ready to respond to a formal request by Washington for resumption.

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7. After suspending the negotiations for almost two years, the Chinese probably judged that to sue directly to Washington for a resumption of the talks would be ideologically and politically unpalatable. Subsequent Chinese actions appeared designed to demonstrate, without a direct initiative, China's desire for renewed talks. The Chinese reacted favorably to the somewhat dramatic US initiative at a fashion show in Warsaw on 3 December, and four days later Peking released two US yachtsmen who had been held in China for ten months, thereby greatly increasing international speculation that the Warsaw talks would soon begin again. The Chinese then agreed to an unprecedented visit by the US ambassador to the Chinese Embassy in Warsaw on 11 December, and the Chinese chargé formally accepted the US proposal to resume the talks during an equally unprecedented visit to the US Embassy on 8 January.

#### China's Motivation

8. Peking agreed to come to the table once more primarily to improve its weak international position against Moscow. It desires also to encourage US neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute and to sound out the US position on a number of important Asian problems. Most immediately, the recent propaganda emphasis and concrete actions by the Nixon administration to relax tensions with China, as well as continued US military disengagement from

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Vietnam, have had a marked impact in Peking. Chinese leaders have shown themselves to be intrigued by these US initiatives, and Peking almost certainly hopes to exploit closer contacts with Washington in order to assess at closer range future US actions in Asia and the implications of those actions for Chinese foreign policy.

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10. Peking's continued weak and isolated international position also appeared to dictate a Chinese move toward Washington. The Chinese leadership has been well aware that Maoist proselytizing and radical diplomacy during the early years of the Cultural Revolution greatly weakened Peking's already poor diplomatic position. Even in traditional areas of influence, most notably in East Asia, Peking's radical domestic and foreign policies alienated China from most of its closest friends. During the past year, China made some efforts to move out of its isolated position, but the results were only partly satisfying. Diplomatic courtesy and convention returned to Peking, a number of Chinese ambassadors returned to friendly states abroad, and Peking attempted to patch up relations with a few strategically important states, such as North Vietnam and Cambodia. These new Chinese diplomatic efforts, however, were on many occasions slow and halting and frequently met with skeptical reaction abroad. The resumption of a Sino-US dialogue represents a dramatic turn in China foreign policy. Peking may hope that the talks will help refurbish China's international image and significantly enhance China's position among many non-Communist and nonaligned states that have long been anxious to support China but have been appalled by Peking's doctrinaire international posture during recent years.

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11. Improvement in China's international position, however, only became critically important to the Peking leadership as the Sino-Soviet border crisis developed into major proportions during last spring and summer. High-ranking Chinese officials, including Premier Chou En-lai, were reported voicing serious concern over Moscow's military and political pressure against China. Threatening Soviet polemical attacks and Moscow's continued military build-up along the border eventually caused the Chinese to back away from their hard-line political position in the border dispute, and they agreed to begin negotiations on 20 October. These stalemated talks, however, have done little to alleviate Peking's concern.

12. As a result, the Chinese at present probably hope that modifying their unproductive anti-US position and agreeing to renew contacts with Washington will enhance their flagging efforts to improve China's diplomatic position and will increase international support for Peking's position in its disputes with Moscow. Peking no doubt judges that renewed meetings with the US in Warsaw, particularly in the secure confines of the US and Chinese embassies rather than the traditional meeting hall provided by the Poles, will greatly increase Moscow's chronic concern over a possible Sino-US rapprochement. By playing on Soviet fears, the Chinese may hope to worry Moscow into adopting a more compromising attitude on border problems and to reduce its pressure on China.

13. There is, of course, another side to this coin. Chinese charges of "Soviet-US collusion," however ridiculous to a dispassionate Western observer, reflect Peking's real concern that the interests of the two superpowers are stacked against China. Peking may expect that meeting with the US will encourage Washington's neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute while increasing China's diplomatic flexibility for international maneuver against Moscow.

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An Opening Door in China?

14. Despite the tactical advantages Peking sees in the resumption of the Warsaw talks, the Chinese almost certainly do not expect a major breakthrough in Sino-US relations. For one thing, Peking will bring to the table the long-standing animosity and ideological baggage that have always limited its flexibility in dealing with the West and Washington in particular. The Chinese have always emphasized a consistently hostile posture against the US as evidence of their Marxist ideological purity--a constraint more recently compounded by the apparently sharp policy disagreements among the Chinese leadership. For example, the more radical, ideologically inclined members among the Chinese leadership, fearing Peking's revolutionary credentials might be put in jeopardy, probably have opposed any significant accommodation or official contact with Washington. Such opposition seemed to have played a major role in Peking's abrupt cancellation of the Warsaw meeting scheduled for February of last year and was again in evidence this fall when Peking was apparently grappling with US initiatives and deciding whether or not to resume the talks. A local broadcast of 19 November, for example, pointedly voiced the radical line. It blasted those in China who hold that there are "clear-minded" people in Washington who want to reach a peaceful understanding with China. The article added that the "heinous ambition" to "bring the wolf (US) into the house" must not be allowed to materialize. Under these circumstances, the mere resumption of the talks with the US represents a major accomplishment for those in Peking who favor a more conventional and pragmatic approach to foreign policy.

15. Aside from these ideological and leadership constraints on China's flexibility, Peking's objectives are limited. The Chinese probably judge that their basic goals of harassing the USSR, encouraging US neutrality, and assessing

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US intentions in Asia can all be adequately fulfilled in the talks without any substantive compromise in Warsaw. In this regard, Peking's failure to return an ambassador to Poland for the talks indicates that Peking does not expect to make any significant concessions at the discussions. Moreover, a Chinese Communist official in Hong Kong stated on 9 January that the US would probably propose issues--such as the exchange of journalists, granting visas, and trade matters--that were unimportant to the Chinese. He emphasized that the key issue for the Chinese is the status of Taiwan, which he described as the "stumbling block" to improved relations with Washington.

16. The Chinese have consistently maintained that the US must abandon its commitment to the Nationalist regime and allow the Chinese themselves to settle the Taiwan issue as an "internal problem" before any significant improvement in Sino-US relations is possible. Peking almost certainly does not expect any such radical US action immediately. The Communists may hope that recent shifts in US China policy will lead over the long term to a significant lessening in Washington's commitment to Taipei. For the present, however, Peking seems prepared merely to wait for a possible initiative from the US side in the talks; meanwhile, the Chinese probably see sufficient advantage in keeping the Warsaw contact open to worry Moscow and to improve China's understanding of US policy in Asia.

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